# Interview with Margaret White Bennett

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Foreign Service Spouse Series

MARGARET WHITE BENNETT

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi

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*Q: This is Jewell Fenzi on Monday, November 21st, 1988, I'm interviewing Margaret White Bennett, Mrs. Tapley Bennett at my home, in Washington, DC.*

I think I would like to start with something that you said downstairs a few minutes ago, that the 1924 Rogers Act . . .

BENNETT: Now remember that at that time, I was only two, so I was not very much aware of what was going on.

*Q: But your mother said your father highly approved of the Rogers Act and the combining of the services, he thought it was a good idea, and then you said that Wristonization was the thing that made the greatest difference in our lives - perhaps not your life and my life, but in the life of the Foreign Service in general and could we expand on that?*

BENNETT: Well, I think you've got these periodic reorganizations, both of the Service and of the Department, and every time they reorganize, they seem to put another layer in between the bottom and the top. You've had your deputy assistant secretaries of State - I remember when an assistant secretary of State was practically God and now, Good Lord. (laughter) There are so many people before he's anywhere. I mean, you've got your Senior Executive Service, I do not see how that's supposed to stimulate people to come into the

Foreign Service, but apparently they haven't really thought through what that implies for themselves and their children's college education. I don't really understand it and since we were getting out, I was very happy not to have to worry about it, but I see it affecting some of my younger friends enormously. But the Wristonization broadened the Service, I think in a quite desirable way, but of course like any plan that's been put on paper, it caused a great deal of heartache for a lot of people who might otherwise never have been bothered because they were happily ensconced in the Department doing a very good job in the Department. But just because they were being splendid at the, say, Deputy Director of East African Affairs, didn't necessarily mean that they'd be a whiz in Mombasa, especially very hard on their wives.

*Q: And they were primarily, weren't they, upper level Civil Service who were a bit older, their children were in high school or college or that age, a hard time for a family to move.*

BENNETT: Well, I think they were the ones that it was harder on. The younger ones were perhaps more adaptable, maybe not. But that sort of thing is not entirely limited to the Foreign Service. I remember talking to the Vice President of Grace Company when my father was in Peru. We'd gone up to see a cardboard factory - the bagasse from sugar cane - and Talara was not exactly the world's greatest metropolis and he said that they used to try and vet their candidates very carefully, they'd show them films, they'd have a wife come in, they'd talk to her and they'd tell her how ghastly it would be, but all in all they both wanted to go. And then they got them down there and the wife would go to buy some meat and be confronted by the raw carcass hanging covered with flies and immediately want to go home, and this sort of obvious culture shock I think is something that you get in every walk of life, but it perhaps hit some of the Wristonees harder because they thought they knew about it.

*Q: I don't think today the Foreign Service goes to the wife of a potential junior officer and tells her what it's going to be like. I don't think they have any contact with her before he comes into the Service.*

BENNETT: No, and I don't believe that even when you get in for ambassadorial wives' orientation that they get too much of a description of what daily life might be like, but then of course a lot has to do with what your financial situation is and also your own mental make-up. Because I think people are very fortunate, who like to paint, and that they can transport everywhere so that no matter how frustrated or how unhappy they are in the beginning, they can always work it off by painting assuming they can make the time to do it.

I think in the old days, before 1972, we had a better time of it as an incoming wife because it was an understood thing that the section chief's wife would see to it that somebody met you and had something in the fridge for you, invited you, took you around shopping, helped you go pay calls. I do not lament the demise of paying calls excepting for the opportunity it offered to find out a little more about where you were if you were bright enough to remember to ask. And it also was a much better way of being able to get to know somebody, certainly from the ambassador's wife's standpoint.

Of course I remember in the Dominican Republic after the revolution, the embassy began being beefed up to where we were fifteen people short of the largest embassy in the hemisphere - I think Brazil was larger than we were - but they poured in AID and people like that and I was finding that I was receiving three and four ladies almost everyday. And I didn't like receiving three and four at a time because I got a mental picture about how Mrs. Jones would look and how Mrs. Smith would look and the one I would visualize as Mrs. Smith turned out to be Mrs. Jones and I never did get them straight (laughter). One shouldn't make previous images I guess.

I used to wonder about this business of good works because I didn't feel that the Dominican Republic was a country where we should be doing good works for the benefit of U.S. personnel. I was rather shocked to learn that the embassy, for instance in Tehran, seemed to be putting on benefits, half of which came back to the Foreign Service Wives' Association and I don't knock the cause, but I just sort of wondered whether when you're

in one of these countries of appalling misery, why I don't think one has a right to take stuff out, but each to his own. I never really felt very strongly about having projects. Helping feed and nurse babies in the children's hospital in Santo Domingo was my project in the embassy. It was something that could be dropped without leaving a great hole. I thought it was a good thing to have something to pull the wives together, but, of course in those days we all expected to do something. Nowadays if you don't know how to go about finding your way, it must be pretty grim.

*Q: How did you go about pulling wives together after 1972? What was your modus operandi?*

BENNETT: At that time Tap was the career senior man at the U.N. and New York was a place that, well, I don't know anybody who can't find something to enjoy in New York and I think everybody, foreigners and we all enjoyed it because it was a place we could all be relatively anonymous. We weren't in the goldfish bowl the way you are in any other, well certainly bilateral assignment.

I didn't pull the wives together. There was the U.N. Delegates' Wives' Club and I worked my head off for that eventually, but we'd try and have the new couple in for a drink when they arrived and I'd try and tell them, “Now don't be worried if your husband's out until 2 a.m. He's really not off with a blonde. He's really working,” (laughs) and so forth. But that was a very hard job on families because most of the people with children, because of schooling, had to live outside of the city which meant a tremendous commute for their husbands. And then they had these ghastly hours, especially during the Assembly time, and it placed tremendous strains on people who couldn't live in Manhattan. And it wasn't all that easy if you lived in Manhattan. I mean if you did live in Manhattan, and you didn't have children, you could go down and sit in the visitors' gallery at the Security Council meetings or the Assembly meetings. But then they'd have to go over and write cables and telegrams or what have you and you were still stuck there at 3 in the morning with no husband, probably no means of getting home.

*Q: So really an assignment like that — with or without children would make a big difference in your attitude toward it, I would think.*

BENNETT: Well of course. I'm a very poor person to interview in one sense because my career - I don't suppose there's anything such as a typical Foreign Service career, but there are some that are more so than others and mine certainly didn't fall into the norm because first of all, we had lovely assignments. We were so lucky and I mean the only assignment that was awkward in the English sense was the Dominican Republic because that blew up and we had a revolution during it. But even that had its pluses and certainly was not an unpleasant place to live, and we had healthy places, we had places where there were enormous cultural - culturally interesting places, and so I feel that we were so fortunate and we were not moved all that frequently so that I don't feel that my service was at all typical.

*Q: Let me say that, in all my interviewing, I haven't found the typical Foreign Service wife because every interview is different and every interview takes on a life of its own, and it's extraordinary how diversified we are and how different [our] experiences have been. About the only thing we have in common is that we were married and that we married Foreign Service officers and that we moved around the world and it is extraordinary how varied our attitudes and our experiences were. So, yes, I'm very interested in talking to you. (laughter).*

Another thing you said before we started chatting was the big difference after the 1972 Directive [The 1972 Policy on Wives of Employees of the Department of State, the United States Information Agency and the Agency for International Development. Usually referred to as the “72 Directive”, the Policy declared that wives were private individuals with no obligation to engage in volunteer activities for the Department of State], and that is the focal point of our project. We're dividing the Foreign Service as old and new, based on the 1972 Directive.

BENNETT: Yes, as a senior wife I was not unduly affected by the 1972 business excepting in so far as that when it came the U.S. turn to give the tea at the U.N. Delegates' Wives' Club, I couldn't call on volunteers. And actually most of it I was able to do on my own, but finally, when it came to producing food, it was supposed to be home-cooked and obviously I wasn't going to spend six weeks preparing for hordes of women's teas and they expected a large meal practically at those teas, so I asked Mrs. Scranton, who was the wife of the perm rep at the time, if at a lunch she was giving I could ask if there was anybody who would be willing to volunteer.

And so I got up and made my little spiel and I got maybe three people who thought they could be of assistance and, as it turned out, it was the wife of our air attach# who took over the project with great enthusiasm in the beginning and did a marvelous job. And so afterward I patted her on the back and I told her how wonderful she was and would she please put down a record of what she had done so that we could leave this with somebody and maybe the next time this came around they'd have something to go on and she said, “There's just one question I'd like to know. When I was a junior wife, the senior wives all sat around and told us what to do. Now that I'm a senior wife, where are those junior wives?” (laughter)

*Q: And what year was this?*

BENNETT: This was, had to have been about the winter of '74 or '75. Maybe 5 or 6, I'm not sure.

*Q: How large a group did you have at the U.N.?*

BENNETT: Oh, it was a sizable group. I really couldn't tell you because, as I say, there wasn't any encouragement from the Department to try and get together too much and one was too busy in New York. As I say, it was one of those places where there was so much

you could do that you were frantically trying to enjoy New York as much as possible while you were there.

*Q: I forget why, but I read the Post Report for the U.N. once and I cannot imagine why I did, maybe just out of curiosity, and one interesting thing I remember from it is that that is the easiest place in the Foreign Service to get a job. That wives have absolutely no trouble.*

BENNETT: Yes, well we had a number of young couples come in and there again, it's been interesting because I think two of them split up, not as a result of New York, but as a result of the next post which didn't allow her to express herself, or something like that, sufficiently.

*Q: According to my contact in Personnel who unfortunately just left for Fiji several months ago, the main reason for attrition among the junior officers is the wife's career, but it doesn't happen as often as we might think.*

BENNETT: No, but it's not just junior officers because we had a. . .

*Q: Oh, that's true.*

BENNETT: We had a middle grade officer who had an assignment in Washington for a while and his wife had gotten a job with a law firm and she was very happy there. Then they got assigned to NATO and this was at the time of the Forum Report. [The Forum Report was drafted in 1977 by the Association of American Foreign Service Women in response to a perceived break down in community relations at US missions abroad as a result of the 72 Directive. The Report resulted in the establishment of the Family Liaison Office (FLO) at the Department in 1978.]

*Q: '76?*

BENNETT: Well, we didn't get to NATO until '77 so that it would have been a little bit later, but somehow that Forum Report didn't make its way firmly on my desk. I think it stayed in Tap's briefcase for a long time, not intentionally, but just the nature of things, and so the about-to-be Director General Harry Barnes was due to come through and Chris Glitman, who was the wife of our DCM at the time, I'd said to her, she'd asked what could she do and I said, “You can deal with wives, thank you, because I'm going to be traveling.” And she did a superb job, but anyhow she felt that she ought to get the wives together to see what they would like to have brought to the Director General's attention, and she called up politely and said that she was having a coffee and did I want to come. And I at first thought I shouldn't, but then I thought, no, it might be interesting to hear what went on.

Well, I'd expected the whole of NATO and then some to show up and instead of which there were six of us. This middle grade wife was just as mad as hops because the Department had promised to help her get her job, and as far as she could see, nothing had happened. And then there was one wife whose first language was French and who had done real estate in the States and she was miffed because the embassy housing section had done such a lousy job on their lease, and she felt that she ought to be in that housing section to deal with it because she could be much more helpful, and she found that those jobs were reserved for locals.

Then we had another old-style wife who was feeling very much at loose ends because there was nothing she could do as an embassy project and I wasn't about to start one at that point. And then there was one brand-new wife who just - we asked whether she had any comments about the greeting procedure and, by this time we had CL[The Community Liaison Office has been established at most US missions abroad. The Coordinator (CLO) is the Family Liaison Office representative at post.] arrangements so they were supposed to take care of this, and she felt that she had been left rather high and dry too, so I don't know.

But anyhow, there wasn't much input other than that for the Director General. And I was interested, oh about three or four years later, by this time the CLO had the three DCM wives in Brussels working very hard and there was much more cohesion and I got the sense that maybe, just maybe, people would like to reverse some of this not being asked to work bit, but of course they wanted recognition for it. What '72 did to me personally was that it just made me feel I was a non-person and therefore, if they didn't want me to work, by gum, they weren't going to get their money's worth out of me which they had previously. (laughs)

*Q: I think our generation felt very much that way and we continued to do things only for personal satisfaction and of course, if your husband said, "Please, can't we have twenty-four people for dinner?" you didn't say no.*

BENNETT: That we went along with automatically. I never understood this business of wanting to be paid for entertaining people because if you were at home you'd be inviting people, too. They'd be your husband's business associates or what have you, and I just felt that whole premise is a completely false one.

Of course, as one wife said to me when I was pointing out that really one had to be able to ask wives to do things — If you were in some very small African post and you got a CODEL (Congressional delegation) coming through, you wouldn't be able to be there supervising the servants because you'd have to take either Mr. Senator or Mrs. Senator around. And the wife looked at me crossly and said, "You shouldn't have to do that." Well, that's ignoring the verities as far as I'm concerned. It would be more apt to happen in a very small post, but even in the large posts, one dropped everything when . . .I remember in Portugal we had a CODEL with Senator Sparkman who at that point was the Majority Leader of the Senate, and Mrs. Sparkman, and they came with a plane load of people. And they were only there, mercifully, for twenty-four hours, but they took up the entire time of the whole embassy plus having to rent cars to look after them, and all of us wives were showing them around this way and that and you might say it wasn't necessary, but

it certainly made the difference in the way those particular people on the trip viewed the Department's activities.

*Q: So those activities that were really an extension of your husband's position - things that you would have been doing if you were home anyway, you didn't object to.*

BENNETT: No, I didn't object to doing them and I did them, but what I was saying was that what I objected to was the fact that one was no longer mentioned as being part of the team.

*Q: Part of the team.*

BENNETT: One was a non-person.

*Q: Did you ever read one of your husband's efficiency reports after this '72 directive?*

BENNETT: I didn't read them, no, but I remember he had a secretary, very attractive, beautifully dressed black girl who came to work for him at the U.N. and decided to go along with him wherever he next went and that happened to be NATO and she was very good in the job and when our daughter got married, we had the wedding in England, and of course asked the secretary to come. And Tap said she was the best-dressed woman at the wedding, which was quite true. And so in his efficiency report he was trying to give the all-around picture, and apart from stating that she did a splendid job he also said that she was the best-dressed woman at my daughter's wedding reception. And they said, “Mr. Ambassador, you can't say that. You cannot make any personal remarks any more even if they're laudatory.” And so this really bothered him because he didn't mean it in the “sexist” way which so many people take so many of these things.

*Q: I did read one report because it was the year I thought Guido should have been promoted. And it was the most astonishing experience. I felt as if I had died, because I wasn't there! Only half of what he was doing was represented there. And if your strength*

*as an officer and as a team was your relationship with the local community, that didn't necessarily show.*

BENNETT: Well, this is one of things that I keep worrying about because more and more you get the business, particularly with the senior officers, where their wife decides to pursue her own career. So she goes off and maybe she's there and maybe she isn't, but she no longer technically is hostess or housekeeper or whatever you want to call it. And the husband does have to do representation, it's still part of the job, and it's still much better when it's done at home than when you take people to a hotel.

And I just don't know what this is going to do to what I call the “oil that lubricates”, because most people still like to have a meal, even when discussing business, and I don't think you're going to change that in most places. A lot of the entertainment one does is probably unnecessary, but one should be able to produce something in the way of a meal. Now some ambassadors get several secretaries or housekeepers to run households for them, so that's not so bad, but it's - I think it's, further down the line, at sort of the political counselor level. I just wonder how this is going to work for them.

*Q: I don't know. It would be interesting, and I don't know if there's any way you could measure it except send a questionnaire out (laughter) to everyone all over the world and say, “Is your perception of America any different now than it was sixteen years ago. . . (laughter) when the American wives were more active and took a more official role?” really, because now the wife is officially unofficial, whereas before we were unofficially official.*

BENNETT: Yes.

*Q: But now she just doesn't appear at all.*

BENNETT: No. Of course another thing I do wish is that people, the fleet of people who come from the Department, who come for meetings and so forth and land as your house

guests thereby saving their per diem - uh, would remember to just write a thank-you note for hospitality, even if it was only the bed. It used to be done and there's no reason why it shouldn't be done. You'd be surprised at the number of people who fail to even say, “Thank you,” telephonically for this.

And I remember at NATO, it was Daniella Gardiner, Dick Gardiner's wife - he was ambassador to Italy - and she finally got so outraged that her official visitors wouldn't leave tips for the servants that she finally put a little card in the guest room saying, “If you would like to express your thanks to those who made your stay as pleasant as we could make it, we suggest so much a day per person.” And I finally took that over, too, because we found otherwise that the household didn't get anything. And half the time they'd be up at 2 a.m. trying to prepare something for this character and . . .

*Q: Exactly. At first, I was tipping them myself for a few months, in Brazil, and then I thought, I am not going to do this anymore. And most people will say, “What can I do for you, can I take you to dinner or something?” And there were very few places to go to dinner and so I'd say, “No, let's just have supper here, but kindly leave something for the staff before you leave.” And most of them did after they were asked, but not before they were asked. (laughs). And that is shocking. That should be understood.*

BENNETT: Well, I think that gradually it is, but just because enough of us have gotten annoyed about it. But I think this whole business of tipping - it was a shock to me when we got to Vienna. Of course, I'd been brought up, when you stayed with people, you left a tip after you'd been there for a night or two. You left something for the household. But it never occurred to me that you were supposed to leave a tip for a meal. I think it's something that's been wherever the Hapsburgs have been, because certainly in Vienna, and of course the Hapsburgs had been in Brussels, and they had been in Holland briefly.

*Q: We used to do that in Holland.*

BENNETT: And anyway, I'd never hit it until we got to Vienna, and suddenly you were expected to leave a tip when you picked up your coat. I thought it was an insult to the host and hostess.

*Q: I was taken aback the first time.*

BENNETT: My household - well, we ran an underground station for Yugoslavs and so we had a Yugoslav butler and cook. But we had an Austrian cleaning woman. And when we had outside help in, they of course always wanted it, so eventually we obviously bowed to the inevitable and let it happen, but it just irritated me so! (laughs)

*Q: Yes. Tell me about your underground, your Yugoslav. . .*

BENNETT: Oh that was rather fun. We arrived in Vienna in August with five children and a collie dog. The five children ranged in age from 11 down to four.

*Q: What year is this?*

BENNETT: This is 1957, two years after the state treaty had been signed and a year after the Hungarian Revolution. Vienna was still recovering from occupation and war and so forth so it was very rundown still. It was the only place I've been where you could walk into a paper shop and buy one paperclip. I was sort of accustomed to buying things in bulk. For instance, I remember going to a grocery store and seeing a crate of oranges, and they said, “Oh gnaedige Frau, if you do that we won't have any for our regular customers.” And then of course I had to get used to the idea that I couldn't feel the bananas and I couldn't feel the whatever it was, that it would have to be picked out for me. (laughs) All told I had quite a lot of culture shock on housekeeping grounds.

But anyway, we were in a pension for, oh, six weeks. We had a house assigned to us but our predecessors were still there when we arrived and then it had to be painted, and so we were in the pension. I don't know who was gladder to get out of the pension, we to leave or

they to have us leave because my young were high-spirited, to put it politely. We'd had to go out the night we arrived and I said, “You've got to find me a sitter.” Well, this frightened rabbit of a woman turned up and she came two nights. Well, she couldn't do anything with the children, but she was very good with the dog. (laughs)

Well, then I kept looking for someone to cope with the young. In the meantime we were also going to need a household and apparently staff were not plentiful in Vienna, especially not good staff. The invasion of Filipinos hadn't arrived yet and so one of the people in Personnel said they'd heard of a Yugoslav couple who were in the, what's the word, not refugee camp, but it was - when people came over from different countries, they would be put in the camp - internees, I guess it is, camp in Traiskirchen and this was a Yugoslav couple and he had been a driver for the U.S. Embassy. And he was a very fine man and she knew that the wife was a fine woman and they had a niece and why didn't we try them?

So, in due course, Djura turned up on the doorstep and we interviewed him and he's a very nice man and he spoke, well, more than broken English and he spoke more than broken German, but it wasn't pluperfect by any manner of means. And he said, yes, his wife could cook. She had never cooked as a paid job, but she cooked for her large family and so forth. Anyway, we liked the looks of him. So we took them on on faith. They were wonderful with the children and we all adored them, but the niece was a total washout, but Djura managed to impose discipline and so things went on pretty well.

Our chief was Doc Matthews [H. Freeman Matthews was Ambassador to Austria 1957-62] who knew his wines and Tap wanted to make a good impression the first dinner or lunch we gave which was for the Matthews, and so he asked me what we were having. And so I apparently had ordered lamb and I don't know what, something else. Well, I wrote out the menu for the first and last time in my life, because when the meal appeared on the table, it bore no resemblance to what was on the menu. (laughter) Tap was furious. He said, “I thought you told me we were having such and such - whatever it was - and I picked the

wines accordingly." And I said, "Look, that's what I ordered. Next time you just ask Djura what we're having." Because of course Djura had to decide, first of all, was it available, and lamb was never available in Vienna, because the Viennese look down on lamb and say it's an insult to serve them lamb which is something I didn't know either. [On narrator's February 1989 visit to Vienna, lamb was to be had on the menu at good restaurants.] No, that wasn't in the post report. And then he had to decide what was available, he had to decide if she could cook it, and then he had to decide if it was suitable for us to serve. So by the time we'd gone through all three of those things, there wasn't much left. (laughter) It was much easier letting him pick the menu. (laughter) But anyway, they got their visas for the U.S. in due course and Djura said, "Now, Mr. Bennett, I'm not going to leave you high and dry. I'm going to find you somebody to look after you. Well, he wasn't able to get us a couple, but he got us a fine young man whose surname was Radovich, who I think was the nephew of a former prime minister and he'd been either a law student and then converted to medicine or vice versa, but he was a very upper crust young man. So Tap had visions of saying, "Radovich, bring me a drink." But that was disposed of the first time we saw him because the guy said, "Just call me Mike." (laughter)

And Mike came to us and Mike had a lot of friends who would come and the house had a nice big basement with a couple of bathrooms in the basement for household, and so Mike's friends would come and take baths in the basement. Well, I never knew what went on in that basement, I carefully avoided asking. Well, then Mike's turn to go to the U.S. came and he, too, was not going to leave us high and dry so he produced Dan. Dan was an artist and he, I don't think was politically a refugee, but he was just tired of being told how to paint, and so he came out and he exhibited abroad, too, and made a little name for himself at one of the Biennials or something like that.

Anyway, he had lots of friends, including lady friends which upset the very nasty gal we had who worked her way from charlady to cook. And she was a pain in the anatomy, but she could cook. Every time I wanted to fire her, Tap would say, "Have we got anybody in her place?" (laughs) And so we suffered. In fact, I would really have enjoyed Vienna

thoroughly if it hadn't been for her. But anyway, there you were. Dan was quite an addition. His driving was something else. We needed somebody to drive to take the children to and from school.

He did monotypes, you know, you have a stone and then you put your color on a stone and then you press the paper down on it so it's never quite the same twice in a row. He would borrow, he would take a patch out of one of the children's cast-off trousers and he would take a bit of Victoria's hair, and all of this would go in, and some of his things were very nice indeed. Well, we discovered that it would be rather fun to show some of these things. Well, he insisted that the only way to look at them was off the floor, so after lunch, we would put them on the floor of the living room, much to the astonishment of our Austrian guests, and then people would start commenting on them. Well, Dan would be passing the coffee and if somebody said something that he'd disapprove of, he'd put down the coffee and tray and say, “No, no, no!” and then launch into this dissertation. So we were rather unusual hosts in those days! (laughter)

*Q: Wonderful American representatives, though really! (laughter)*

BENNETT: Well the best American representative in that embassy was a gal whose name was Sally Kennedy and she was at the time a file clerk and she was mainline Philadelphia, but anyhow, she was very friendly and outgoing and she met people and so forth. Well, she with great courage, had decided to ask this lofty creature, the political counselor to - because Vienna was very hierarchical and I find that embassies take on the character of the host country and if it's a hierarchical country, why then it's very, very, very stiff.

So, anyhow, she asked us to dinner on a certain night and said, “Come after eight,” which was slightly late by Vienna standards, that was all right. We waited until 8 o'clock and the phone rang and it was Sally saying that she'd managed to lock herself out of the apartment, but the locksmith was there, and it should be about another hour, but not to bother coming until she called, although she had been able to persuade her next-door-

neighbor to take in everybody. Well, she called and said we could come, so we finally turned up.

Well, meantime, the poor next-door-neighbors didn't know what had hit them. They had never met Sally. The husband worked on the autobahn in some sort of engineering capacity and I don't know what Frau whatever-her-name-was did, but Frau ended up cooking the dinner for Sally and being part of the party in that we moved backwards and forwards between the two apartments.

Well, Sally decided a few months later that she had skimmed the cream off of Vienna and she would move on. So she had a farewell party. And she had at that party everybody from Prince Fuerstenberg, a bluer blood you cannot find, down to, I think, her charlady, even. And everybody thoroughly enjoyed this mix! But very few people would have been able to do it, and certainly nobody else in that echelon of the embassy even thought of entertaining that way. Sally was quite a gal because she went on to France and she ended up working as a sort of governess for some French politician. And they apparently had the third floor of the apartment house and Sally's bedroom was in the garret. And I think there may have been a loo up there, but I'm not even sure of that. But when she wanted to take a bath, she was supposed to come down to the apartment, and after the five little boys had bathed, then she could use their bath water. (laughter) We lost track of her after that, and I'm very sorry because I think she was a great loss.

*Q: She sounds like an interesting woman. When did you come into the Service, about '53 or . . .*

BENNETT: Well, what had happened was, Tap had joined the Service just in '41 and then he tried desperately to join the Navy, but he is as blind as a bat and despite getting a waiver from Admiral Leahy, FDR's physician, the Navy said, “You still have the eyes,” and wouldn't take him. And so he served for three years in the Dominican Republic and then went to Panama. We met between the Dominican Republic and Panama, although he was

in the Dominican Republic at the time my parents were in Haiti and they had met him, but I hadn't. He discovered when he got to Panama that that was one of the two places you could still enlist at that time and not be drafted, so he was able to do a con job as far as the eye test was concerned and was accepted for the Army.

We actually got engaged at Panama when I was on my way down to meet my parents for Christmas in Peru, and I was bumped from the plane from New York to Miami and that bothered me. But the Miami to Panama plane had been delayed, so I was able to make that after all. But in the meantime, I had missed the flight to Peru. I was invited to stay at Ambassador Warren's - this was Avra Warren who knew my parents through the Foreign Service, and so I stayed up there. And Tap had been Warren's attach# in the Dominican Republic and in fact Warren had asked for Tap to come along to Panama. So this was very nice. And so we announced our engagement ten days later. And so I went on to Peru and by this time, he was coming into Intelligence in Washington and he came up to the Pentagon.

So we married in '45 and he stayed in the Army, oh had to stay in the Army, I guess - I can't remember what year he got out - '47 or so. And then he went back to the Department. And then we went abroad in '57, having had all five children in Washington which was lucky, I think. I didn't have to travel with anybody until Victoria was coming up four, which made quite a difference.

And then we went to Vienna. He was political counselor there, and then we were supposed to go to Rome from Vienna, but the two embassies had been fighting over him as to when he would go, and eventually he went on the condition that he must represent the Vienna embassy at some conference, and we got to Rome. And Outer[bridge] Horsey was Charg# and had been Charg# for something like nine months, and Tull(H.G.) Torbert had already left to go elsewhere, and so poor Outer had been carrying the three top jobs singlehanded so ....

End Tape I, Side ABegin Tape I, Side B

. . . Tap was being transferred to Rome and so I was allowed to stay on in our house in Vienna because our successor wasn't coming until the summer which meant the children could finish the school year.

But I went down to Rome with a compartment load of stuff that I'd packed with my lily-white hands because the Department had suddenly gotten sticky about our weight allowance. And Tap had already gone with another compartment load and they took a small truck to take everything to the apartment. And it was one of those Via Pinciana apartments, perfectly lovely. I wasn't quite sure how we were going to fit into this place. The bathtub was the size of this room. (laughter) And I'd forgotten to bring any flower vases and people had been kind and sent some, so I had come back with some and I was feeling rather hot and stretched out in this great long marble sarcophagus affair, and Tap suddenly burst in and said, “It's a good thing you're lying down, because I've been transferred to Greece and I'm to be there next week.” (laughter)

And this was the day that the Horseys were giving a party to introduce us to the Romans. Tap and Outer spent the whole party on the phone to Washington trying to get this thing changed. I uttered more inanities about where I planned to send my children to school. So then Tap managed to get a slight delay in going to Greece because Queen Elizabeth was coming on a State Visit. He was like Dick Whittington, he was bound and determined to see the Queen of England. And as it happened Outer that night had some sort of intestinal flu or something, so Tap was actually acting charg# which meant we got into the holy of holies and got to see her.

And then the next day we slunk out of town in the Fiat which we wouldn't have bought if we'd known we were going to Greece. We had it packed with our best silver in a foot locker in the back seat. Everybody was saying, “Oh, you mustn't travel through Italy! Cars

get broken into," and so forth, but we put it in parking lots, hotel garages. And then we got on the ferry, were met in Patras.

Neither of us in our wildest imaginations had ever expected to fetch up in Greece and we really thought we liked green landscapes, so we were not really looking forward to Greece at all. Well, just driving along the coast from Patras to Corinth, the lovely golden tones of the hills against the blue, blue water, we just fell in love with Greece, and up to the time we went to NATO, that was my favorite posting.

We hit it at a fantastic time because Sam Berger, who was the Charg# at the time, was wanted in Seoul yesterday, and he was crushed to be leaving, needless to say. We arrived, Sam left, and ten days later, I went back to Vienna to pay, pack and follow. And ten days after that, after Tap had taken over as Charg#, Mrs. Kennedy arrived on a semi-official trip. I don't have to tell you that semi-official trips are the pits, give me one or t'other, but not the in-between. She was our best export at the time, she was absolutely fantastic. She had crowds just cheering everywhere we went.

*Q: So where are we 1960 now?*

BENNETT: This is 1961. And she finally decided, she was on Nomikos's family yacht most of the time, I think she was recuperating from the loss of the baby at that point. But she was the guest of the prime minister. And so she eventually decided she had better give a party. So we were going to do this at the Residence.

Ambassador Briggs [Ellis O. Briggs was Ambassador to Greece 1959-62] had gone on leave, and then he had had to, oh what's the word, he'd had to escort Adlai Stevenson around Latin America so that he was going to be gone about five months. That's why he screamed for Tap. So we had the party at the Residence and she got up to make the toast and she has that very soft, rather breathy voice and she paused, and was obviously searching for the word and the whole dinner table of 50-odd people were straining to help her. And it was a very nice speech. So afterwards our assistant PAO went up to her and

said, “Oh, Mrs. Kennedy, that was simply wonderful. People would love to have a copy of that. Could you possibly re-constitute it?” “Sure,” she said, and reaching down her front, pulled out the speech. (laughter) She'd done a very professional job.

And it was a wonderful time to be in Greece because Americans were popular. Karamanlis was prime minister and we had a nice house and a nice household and thoroughly nice chiefs, Ellis Briggs and then Henry Labouisse [Henry Labouisse was Ambassador to Greec1962-65].So we had a marvelous time there.

I decided to learn Greek as we'd gone to an Hellenic-American, no AHEPA — an Hellenic-American organization that's based here in the States — gathering. They have them twice a year, and Tap was supposed to make a speech and there were a lot of speeches and only Tap's was in English and we didn't really know whether to laugh, cry, smile or what to do. And I decided that this wasn't going to happen again, that I would at least know what was being said, so I took lessons. And I had a wonderful arrangement. I took the brain washing course the Embassy put on first and then decided I didn't like this business of saying, “I will come yesterday,” or vice versa, and so I eventually ended up with a young man who was a law student. I made the arrangement that I would pay by the hour and he would come at 12 noon. He would stay until Tap came home for lunch. Sometimes it was 2 o'clock, sometimes it was 3 o'clock, but in the beginning I had him every day through the week and then it simmered down to about three times a week.

By the time I left, I was very fluent in Demotic Greek. I still wasn't good at reading the newspapers, the print was atrocious. And Katharevousa is a little bit like the French subjunctive with that little word ne in French, which can or can not mean yes or no. And so when I tried to read the headlines, the only time I really knew what the score was, was when it was De Gaulle, because you knew he was being negative (laughter covers up words).

Greece is a delightful country and it was such an open society, even though they had the monarchy on top. My feeling about monarchies is that they just add an extra dimension to life which just complicates the thing. We had a lot of fun. We were young enough then so that we weren't too old to be included in parties for the Crown Prince and princesses.

As I say, we had a lot of good Greek friends. I have one Greek friend, her husband subsequently was at the U.N., then he was at the Common Market in Brussels. And she said, “I never write you letters because if I never write you letters, I think of you, but if I write you, I stop thinking of you,” which I have thought was the most wonderful (laughter) excuse.

*Q: Well, you obviously enjoyed your Foreign Service career. Did you enjoy your Foreign Service childhood as fully? You just took it for granted, I suppose*

BENNETT: Oh, well. I was an only child. My first recollections are of the park in Riga when I was three and four and just odd scenes, nothing very significant. And then we came home to Washington, partly because my grandfather at that point was dying. So we were around for a year and a half and I went to Potomac and had a French madame who would come in in the afternoon. And I was supposed to take naps in those days. And she and I had a number of set-tos.

I got quite good at getting rid of the French. You know the French have this, especially the French, but I think most Europeans have this engaging idea that just because you're an adult, you should be obeyed. And this is not what the American infant is brought up to be believe. And this particular madame foundered on the matter of discipline and my mother solved it by saying that since I was so unpleasant, I obviously must need a laxative and gave me castor oil and put me to bed and madame didn't come any more.

But two weeks before we were due to go to Buenos Aires, she was desperate because she knew she had to have somebody for me because social life was so intense down

there, and my grandmother interviewed this charming young woman who was a Swiss girl who was only about 22, I think, at the time and she'd already been in the States for about two or three years. As Miquette told it, she was listening to the previous governess apparently unloading herself about how the family was all right, but the child was absolutely impossible. Well Miquette had been with the direct opposite arrangement before, so she thought that it couldn't be too bad, and my grandmother interviewed her, and except for thinking that she was awfully young, sent her on down.

Well I remember Miquette came down to pick me up with Mummy at Potomac School and said something and smiled and she didn't have any trouble with me. I think she spanked me once. Most of the time it was just - of course she was sensible and she was loving and didn't make a fuss about things that didn't matter, so I had seven lovely years with her. She went to Buenos Aires with us. This was the way it was as far as I was concerned. I've always thought it was a huge mistake when you have children to offer them choices or let them think things could be different. You tell them this is the way it is and they accept it.

*Q: I think there's something in that, too.*

BENNETT: I know there is.

*Q: I feel that my children grew up knowing nothing else. You must have grown up much the same way.*

BENNETT: Yes, well leaving Buenos Aires after five years was quite a wrench. I learned to ride there. It was still the old-style life because you had governesses in those days, it was the done thing and all that. And again I have great trouble deciding what was peculiar to the Foreign Service and what was peculiar to the lifestyle of the social walk that my family lived in, so it's a little hard to separate them. The disadvantage is perhaps, my mother decided she wanted to come back to the States and the question was to have

three summers in a row or three winters in a row from Buenos Aires. So she opted for three winters in a row and was able to get me into Chapin in New York for the first . . .

*Q: Where she had gone?*

BENNETT: Yes. For the first term. I mean it was only going to be one term and they were willing to accept me on that basis. And I got to Chapin. Now mind you, I was accustomed to eating with my parents at lunchtime with their guests, I was accustomed to a certain amount of intelligent conversation. I got to fifth grade and was very interested to see how things were done in the States in school because of course I didn't really remember first and second grades much. And apparently sounded off one time too many about the differences or similarities between the two scholastic systems because I was in public school in Buenos Aires, Argentine public school by this time, and I was promptly dubbed “Maggie Wheatena from Argentina.” And I hated it and my grandmother hated the “Maggie” part even more. And I didn't have sense enough to “if you can't lick 'em, join 'em” then.

So here I was dubbed with this thing. And then I went back to B.A. and then the next year Chapin couldn't take me, but they would take me in the afternoon for sports. And I had the best luck because, I don't know how Mummy did it, but she got me into, it no longer exists, the King Coit Drama School. And there we lived, breathed and acted Shakespeare. Math was done in Shakespearean terms. It was fantastic and such fun. I really enjoyed it so much and I have had a love of Shakespeare ever since. But the “Maggie” stuck at Chapin and when I came back to Foxcroft, I was a four-year girl at Foxcroft, there was part of the same Chapin clique there and of course I promptly became Maggie. This time I was smart enough to know that if you can't lick 'em, join 'em, so I insisted on being called Maggie by everybody to my grandmother's great distress. I didn't get on with my own class particularly well. I got along beautifully with the class ahead of me and very well with the class below me and I thoroughly enjoyed the teachers and the school was in an absolutely beautiful location and so I'd say on the whole, it was a perfectly happy

experience, although probably my first year it wasn't really homesickness, but just that I was different.

*Q: So you were a boarder at Foxcroft?*

BENNETT: Yes. At that time they didn't have day students. I must say we were very lucky. We had good teachers then. If you wanted to study hard, you could. After four years in boarding school I certainly didn't want to go and enroll myself in a female establishment again. I don't think my grandmother would have approved of a proper coed institution and I ended up attending Julliard School of Musical Art which was a mistake in one way in that I wasn't ever going to be a concert pianist and I wasn't good enough. All it did was give me professional standards without the ability to live up to them.

*Q: Which grandmother - is this your mother's mother who was exerting this influence?*

BENNETT: Yes, and you see I was left with her during holidays. And she, poor dear, had my teenage difficulties to put up with. For instance, my parents by this time were in Calcutta. Mummy came home one summer and took me out to Calcutta which was quite a trip in those days. We flew from Leipzig and that was the way to fly because you came down for meals (laughter) and you came down for the night, too. Oh, it was lovely.

But they got malignant malaria from which one either died or recovered and didn't get again, on the way back from Kashmir where we'd been trekking and so they did both obviously recover, but they were in no shape to travel. The doctor wouldn't let Mummy travel. So with fear and trembling my parents put me on the train from Calcutta to Bombay as the charge of Ali, our Mohammedan bearer.

It was no big deal because there were no aisles on the train, so you got served from every station. Ali would check on me every station. That was all right. I taught myself to type during those three days. Then I got to Bombay and was in the care of our Consul there. He was supposed to find somebody to chaperone me on the ship to Naples. And I

remember he included me in his party when he went to the Dutch National Day or Queen Wilhelmina's birthday or whatever it was. I had visions of drinking a toast to the Queen and smashing the glass. I should have known better from the Dutch, but there's no such thing. . .

*Q: Waste a glass like that! (laughs)*

BENNETT: It was in the hotel anyway. But he found a young college girl, I guess she was a sophomore, 19, to look after me on the ship. Well, that was very interesting because it was a great question as to who was chaperoning whom. She was a real flirt and had every youth on the ship sighing. And they would come and weep on my shoulder. (laughter) I couldn't quite see what all the fuss was about. My father had made me promise that I would not set foot in Port Said. And I wasn't going to but then I discovered that there was an American Express tour of Cairo and the pyramids and I thought, “Well, I may never get back again.”

*Q: How old were you at this time?*

BENNETT: Fifteen. And so I discovered - there was a whole college crowd on board including the divorced mother of one of the students and his tutor and in retrospect I sort of wonder about the tutor in relationship to Mama, but nevertheless, Mama was there, and I thought if I went with Mama and clung to Mama, Daddy couldn't really complain if I broke my promise. So we went up to the pyramids and that was interesting. And we got to the museum which was like a junk shop, it was so higgledy-piggledy. And then we spent an inordinate amount of time as far as I was concerned in the bazaars and finally got the train back to Port Said and went down to the waterfront and no ship. Due in about 8.

So clinging to Mama, we went to what was billed as the best hostelry and I don't know what everybody else drank, I had an orange juice, and after 8 o'clock we went back to the waterfront, still no ship. So I guess we went back to the same hostelry, I don't really remember. By this time it was dark and they had some light around the edges and the

audience seemed to be mainly men, which I didn't realize at the time was typical for that country. And this floor was mosaic in fact. And on limped this woman who then did sort of a ballet dance, but it seemed to me the men's eyes were glittering, and oh, it was terribly romantic. I guess that was my very proper upbringing. I don't know, being a very prissy little girl at that point.

Well, then the gang got up and decided to go back to the waterfront again — still no ship. Then I spotted a bookshop. I still had a little money left and went in and I looked for the fattest book I could find which turned out to be the Kristin Lavransdatter and I think if my father had known I was reading that, he'd have been much more upset than by my being in Port Said under those circumstances. But anyway, I found it, paid for it and sat under the single bare bulb reading until 1 o'clock in the morning when the ship finally came in. (laughter)

*Q: What is Kristin Lavransdatter?*

BENNETT: It's a three-volume novel by Sigrid Undset about marriage, and love, which my father wouldn't have approved of my reading at that age.

Then we finally arrived in Naples and the Consul General, who I think, was Isaiah Bowman had just arrived and he was still in the hotel, it was the Excelsior, and I'd had a room there. And Bruno Mussolini, the son of Mussolini, and entourage had decided to come down to Naples for the weekend and pre-empted the whole floor so my room had gone by the board. But the Bowmans very kindly let me sleep on the sofa in their suite which was very hard on them, I would think. And I had about four days between ships and the Byingtons were in the Consulate at the time and Fritz Jandrey and I forget who some of the others were - they organized a picnic up Vesuvius by moonlight which was great fun. And Vesuvius had been erupting somewhat by that point. You could look up at the top and see a red glow and we went, oh, I suppose two-thirds of the way up, with a mule in tow carrying the picnic and what not and decided to picnic.

Well, it was a rather chilly evening , but one sat down on what one thought was rock and the next thing one did was to stand up because Vesuvius had given a little puff and it was too hot to sit on! (laughter) Anyhow, I thoroughly enjoyed that and then was put on the Rex and had a wonderful time picking up all sorts of people on this ship, none of whom my grandmother thought much of, including the Jesuit priest who had the cabin next to mine (laughter) with whom I kept up for quite some time.

But it was fun, but my poor grandmother suffered terribly after that because anytime she wanted to stop me from doing something such as - I mean my bounds in New York. I could walk down - she lived at 67th and Park, I could walk uptown to I suppose the Metropolitan Museum, but I wasn't allowed to walk below Bloomingdales on Lexington and that was rather dubious. I certainly was not allowed to walk on Third Avenue and I could go down Madison as far as, I guess Altman's, 34th Street, and I could go down Fifth as far as Altman's, but again with many palpitations on the part of my grandmother. And sometimes she wouldn't want me to do something. And I'd say, “But Grandmother, if I could come back from India by myself, surely. . .!”

*Q: Tell me a little bit about her because she must have been formidable.*

BENNETT: My grandmother was five foot two and one quarter and mind you remembered the quarter, and very dainty. She went white very early on - I think in her thirties - so that by the time I knew her, she was white-haired. People used to describe her as a cross between a Dresden china doll and a French marquise. And she always dressed beautifully and was very dainty in her manners. And me with my elbow gestures and so forth. She tried to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

But she just wasn't going to make a nice dainty person out of me. The build was wrong and the whole approach was wrong. She was left a widow due to an automobile accident in 1916. And she had never handled her own affairs before. Women didn't in those days. And the two boys I guess were - well Pierrepont was in Groton still and I guess Abbot

had started Groton, and the Rector of Groton, Endicott Peabody - she asked him for advice to deal with the boys. And he said, “Well I think you should read articles and go to public affairs lectures and you should be interested in such matters.” So she did that and she became fantastically well-informed on things and thereby inculcated, or at least encouraged both boys to be interested in it. And I don't know how much - my mother's never really talked about that period very much because she was in the car, so that I think that was a rather traumatic period. But when the U.S. got in the War, my mother was able to go down and get a telephone job, again rather a departure from normal family activities. But Grandmother went down and was a Gray Lady at the docks and she used to write letters for these poor soldiers and the family used to roar with laughter over that because she had a very difficult handwriting. Daddy used to say that he could read my grandmother's writing and my mother could read his father's writing, but neither could read their own parent's writing. (laughter) It was good training for me, though, because I can usually decipher most handwritings.

*Q: Having had experience.*

BENNETT: Yes. But anyway, Grandmother had very, very strong feelings of right and wrong and what was done and what was not done.

*Q: As they did in those days.*

BENNETT: I always thought she was a little too concerned with what the public thought. To me, I came along thinking all of this smacked of hypocrisy and I was also awfully bored by just the well-born that she wanted me to associate with because they weren't interesting to me. And I don't know what I wanted, but it certainly wasn't that.

As I say, from the time my parents went to Calcutta, I was hers for vacations and she shepherded me through the proper New York social routine, the subscription dances which I think are enough to scar you for life, the system, unless you are a raving beauty. I went through all of those and the first two seasons, she hired a chaperone to escort me

to and from and I used to get very put out because I said, “But all my friends can go and be brought home by boys.” No indeed, I couldn't be. And once or twice I was very grateful because the boys were all experimenting with alcohol. Some of them used to pass out and it was very unpleasant.

The chaperone rejoiced in the name of “Melbournia”. (pronounced Melbonia) Of course she'd been named because she'd been born in Melbourne, Australia. And Melbonia she looked, too. (laughter) I finally enjoyed the New York social season a bit when I'd come out. By that time I'd finally acquired a few boys who enjoyed being with me and so I had my own little stag line, but the first dance I went to was really ghastly because Grandmother gave a dinner before it for me, the boys were not exactly imbued with the social graces. And I only knew three boys in the whole of the U.S. so that it was really quite traumatic.

As I say, once I'd finished coming out, then I had a lot of fun and met all sorts of people and so on. That was part of the Foreign Service aspect, being shipped to Grandmother for such a long time at a stretch. I guess normally children are shipped to Grandmother for maybe a week now and then. Grandmothers might like to have them longer, but . . .

*Q: Yours was years. So did you ever really live with your parents again after that?*

BENNETT: No, I never lived with them. I visited them in Haiti and I visited them in Peru. I was there for about two months. Then Tap began sounding as if he might be going to Germany and that didn't suit my plans at all, so I said good-bye to my parents and went up to at least see him before he went off to Germany. It turned out that he'd probably be going on a trip and that didn't transpire until after we were married. Then he was seconded from the Army at Warren's request to the San Francisco Conference and so he was at that.

And he was the one who set our wedding date and so it was only he that could reproach himself that he'd done so because he had to leave just before it ended, he was furious! (laughter)

So then we had been very fortunate through my grandmother's pull in landing an apartment in Parkfairfax which is where we lived for the first year and a half we were married. Our eldest was born while we were there, courtesy of the Army at Walter Reed. The whole thing cost $7.00. Be it said that I saw three obstetric doctors and the fourth one was the one who delivered me, but never mind. No complications, I survived very happily.

And the one thing about Parkfairfax, we were on the middle floor. Tap had given me a very nice gardenia, for having produced the son and heir. It had so many blossoms, we decided to try to keep the thing alive. We discovered that by putting it in the kitchen sink and running the water about this high, it would last the weekend very nicely. So fine, we were going out to my parents in Maryland for the weekend. The baby had been teething and was fussy and the phone had been ringing right and left and I was packing the car and so forth. And Tap called and said that he was ready now and I had put the plant in to water it. There hadn't been enough water so anyhow, I kept it going. Came back on Monday and thought there's something strange about this floor, something's different, I couldn't quite figure out what it was. Anyhow, I unpacked, got the baby in and so forth, walked into the kitchen, and somebody had had the crass nerve to take my plant out of the kitchen sink.

Well, I went on about my business and noticed out the window that people seemed to be coming and going in a great deal of the neighbor's apartment, but they had been having work done anyhow, so I didn't think anything about it. Presently, the doorbell rang and it was one of the Parkfairfax maintenance people and they said, “Would you come downstairs a minute?” So I said, “Fine.” And they said, “You see this?” And they showed me some discolored things and I said, “Yes.” “You see this?” And I said, “Yes. Would you mind telling me what all this is about?” He said, “You mean you don't know?” And I said, “No.” “Well your upstairs neighbor noticed water coming out underneath

her doo(which was on the same level as ours) and called us and you had left the water running in the sink." Tap said it would have been a lot cheaper if he'd bought me corsages daily. (laughter) We were due to move in two weeks, which was the worst part of it. And Parkfairfax was simply horrid. They dunned me everyday to know if we were going to pay the whatever it was that we owed them which we were going to do the day we left.

Anyhow, then we moved into our house in Georgetown and my parents at that time still had a house that they had bought to assemble everything in order to throw out. They had a yard man and so Mummy very kindly said that she would send him along. His name, I think, was Roane and my father was great at nicknaming people and the man had such a presence that Daddy used to call him the Duc de Rohan. And anyway the Duc de Rohan came, and I carefully explained that he was to be very careful of my precious gardenia which hadn't been doing too well in the garden. Well anyway, the Duke came along and proceeded to level everything including the gardenia! (laughter)

*Q: After all that! (more laughter)*

BENNETT: Anyway, the Timberlakes lived right around the corner from us. Tim Timberlake had been in the consulate when Daddy was in Buenos Aires. He was much older than Julie who was a day younger than I. She had a fourteen-month old and mine was eighteen months old. We both were pregnant as all get-out at this time. We used to puff the hill to Montrose Park and puff back down again. We both had boys the second time around. But she had an Rh factor so all her children after the first one had to be pumped full of blood, but she went right on and had five, too. It was quite amazing. Anyhow, we had very pleasant times in Washington.

Then Tap went to the National War College in '55 and then was assigned as Robert Murphy's executive assistant for a year which was wonderful training. Murphy was a marvelous man. Later, we had great fun because he and Ellis Briggs had their 70th

birthdays just about the same time. We found this birthday card and sent it to each of them.

And the reaction was very interesting because the birthday card read, “Since you and I are good friends, we've known each other for so long, I'd like to ask you a personal question.” Turn the page. “What was Abe Lincoln really like?” (laughter) So we sent it to them both and never heard boo from Ellis which rather surprised me because Ellis did have a good sense of humor. But apparently this didn't strike his funny bone.

Murphy wrote back the most enchanting letter saying, “Oh thank you so much for remembering my birthday. It was very nice of you to remember and, since you asked, Abe, I called him Abe, you know . . .” And he went on from there and spun this charming fantasy. (laughter) But anyway, you should talk to Sally Briggs when you can get a hold of her. There's another.

*Q: Pat Squire plans to talk Lucy Briggs*

BENNETT: Oh she's a love. I've never known anybody to have such serenity. She just radiates this sort of peacefulness. She was a very forceful person because she forced the American Women's Organization of Greece to takGreek members, which didn't set well with the founders of the club. It was something she felt, I think quite rightly, needed to be done.

*Q: What did she do?*

BENNETT: Well, there was an American Women's Club of Greece, AWOG as it was called, and it was the place that Americans, especially the businesswomen who founded it, went to when they had had enough of local culture and could sound off about those “awful people” sort of thing. Lucy felt that the time had come, was long since past, for that sort of thing. One ought to be open. The Greeks were great joiners of clubs. And so she made them have Greek members.

Well the trouble was that we were swamped with people joining. And it was all very overlapping because there was an Hellenic-American Women's Club, there was the Hellenic something-else Club and they all did more or less the same thing and had the same membership. I remember saying to our then Economic Counselor's wife, “I do wish they'd just amalgamate so that one wouldn't have to have all these meetings,” because I was Madam Meeting, Madam Representative for the Embassy. And I remember Helen saying, “You don't think Mrs. Micheli is going to give up her job as president do you?” (laughter).

*Q: That sounds quite a bit, but I must say the Netherlands American Women's Club in Rotterdam was the best organization like that I ever belonged to overseas because it immediately put us in contact with the Dutch. And it sounds like maybe you had an overload, but nonetheless, I agree with Mrs. Briggs, don't you?*

BENNETT: Well, yes! Now in Brussels, they have an American Women's Club and of course it used to be such a center for American business. They had, I think, 900 American or foreign-born American wives who were members. It's the only one I know of that owns its own club house.

*Q: Oh yes?*

BENNETT: And they have all sorts of programs. I can't remember what. I was honorary and I really didn't go there much. I think I went there twice during the time I was in Brussels simply because at that time I had had club life, and I felt it was my colleague, the ambassador's wife to Belgium's job to do that. (laughs) They had a very gung-ho program and so forth and it's a nice place. As I say, I don't remember what their arrangement was for foreign members. You could certainly bring them for guests which you hadn't been able to do at the Greek one.

*Q: Let me jump way back because I don't know when I'll be able to talk to your mother again. You mentioned that she had a very interesting time in Germany in the '30's. Now do you remember any of that?*

BENNETT: Well, we got there in January of '34, I think it was.

*Q: And you would have been?*

BENNETT: I was twelve. And I was allowed to come to the table at lunchtime and they used to do a lot of entertaining at lunch with different peoplPutzi Hanfstaengel who was Hitler's crony - he was a lightweight type - but he used to play the piano. Anyhow he was one of those people whom one felt one should entertain. I remember his coming to lunch. But get Mummy to tell you about the time we went to the people who lived in, I think it was Wannsee, the day of June 30th, '34, which was the bloodbath day because that was quite an interesting experience for her.

I'll tell you my bit of it, not that day, but I was put in the Mommsenschule which was the private school for girls run by the daughter or the niece of the historian Theodor Mommsen. She wore a long gray flannel dress with her hair up in a bun and sort of a bib in front. Did you ever see that movie “Maedchen in Uniform” because it was very much the style of clothing she wore. She was something of a martinet, but not nearly as bad as she might have been. The French teacher, Fraulein Schwerin also wore that. The other teachers were more up-to-date. And this school went from, well I suppose age eleven up through I suppose, I don't know, the German classes were different, but I think probably up through high school was what it amounted to. And it catered to the lesser nobility, the junkers, and the Army. And they did let foreigners in and the daughter of our Assistant Military Attach# was my best friend. She and I were in the same class, out of a class of thirteen girls, actually. We had in my class a girl whose surname was von Spiegelberg. She was definitely Jewish. We had a couple of other foreigners and we had a couple of merchant daughters. Anyhow, that was our class.

Von Schleicher, who was the general, he was murdered and his wife, too, on the 30th of June, and their daughter attended school. And she came back all dressed in black about a week after the event. It was quite interesting.

I asked my father. We were supposed to say, “Heil Hitler” and do the salute and all that. I said, “What do I do?” He said, “Do as they do, but don't go out of your way.” And periodically Hitler would make a speech and we'd all have to listen to it on the radio. Boring!

*Q: This was all in German, of course.*

BENNETT: This was all in German, so I was having quite a struggle the first half, although I'd spoken German in Latvia, I'd forgotten it and had French and Spanish in-between. So I thought German was a most difficult language. My children, whom I put in French school in Austria after they'd had German three years in Austria, thought French was the most difficult language. So I understood those two languages. We had all the normal subjects and after my first term, I began getting, oh, three's in German which was a C, which I thought was quite . . .

End Tape I, Side BBegin Tape II, Side A

*Q: Go ahead then. In the “Heil Hitler” - did you do that as we do the Pledge of Allegiance in the morning?*

BENNETT: Oh yes. Every time the teacher came in it was “Heil Hitler”. I mean rather or more this way because when I first got to the school, they were relatively relaxed about it. Then the powers that be started cracking down and it was announced that we would all have to an hour a week of Nazi indoctrination. I asked my father again, “Do I take this or not?” And he said, “Take it, but don't believe a word of it” sort of thing. Mostly it was so dull that one went to sleep. There was one interesting period to me when they were discussing the Germans in enclaves hither and yon. I wished I'd paid more attention to that because

certainly the Latin American ones would have been useful to remember later on in life, but that, because it was geography and history was a little bit better, but the rest was very dull.

But then they began having more militant Nazi teachers. I remember we had one - I think she was not naturally that, but felt that she had to almost overplay her hand. And she got rather firm about everybody doing their “Heil Hitler” salute properly and so forth. In my class, we had one girl who was a Hitler Maedel or BDM as they were called, Bund Deutsche Maedel, I think it was. She apparently had been told that she must do something about the Jewish girl in our class. And she had one very good friend who was quite a nice girl who was her special sidekick, but the good friend wasn't in the BDM. Well I was not present when this scene occurred and the reason I was not there, it was one that I think illustrated the German mentality perfectly. I was being hauled on the carpet for the misdeeds of my fellow Americans, some of them in other classes, because my father was the ranking American. And so I missed this great scene. But apparently in the recess yard, the BDM girl chose that moment to go up to the von Spiegelberg girl and call her a couple of nasty names, “You something Jewess”, something like that. And, interestingly enough, the Jewish girl burst into tears, but the whole school rallied around her and sent this girl, the BDM girl, to Coventry. And when I got back to class, my American pal said “We're not talking to her anymore. And the whole class has agreed - will you pass the pencil, please, yes, but I mean nothing other than that.” So only her good friend stood by her, and for the rest of that year, we did not talk to her. I thought it was extremely interesting. Well, I left in spring of '36.

*Q: But before you leave, tell me, how were you called on the carpet for the misdeeds of the others? I mean, were you supposed to go back and tell your father that these girls were . . . (laughs)*

BENNETT: I don't know what I was supposed to do. I thought it was so ridiculous, that I just said yes, Ja Ja, and just sat through it and then said to my friend, “What the devil am I supposed to do about this?” (laughs) Besides, some of these girls were older than I, even

had I been under the illusion that I could control them, they wouldn't have listened to me in the first place, but it was funny.

*Q: And so this school, you were 1934 to 1936?*

BENNETT: '36. I went back on the way to India in '37 because the plane flew from Leipzig and so we stopped in Berlin for a while and I went back to see my classmates . The school was still extant then, but I think it was the next year that the Air Ministry decided that it needed the building and I think Fraulein Mommsen by this time had seen the handwriting on the wall, so she gave up the school entirely and I guess moved elsewhere. During the War it was bombed and it was a hole in the ground when we went back to Berlin in '69. It was a curious arrangement really.

*Q: I think your father's advice to go along with it, but don't believe it, was the best he could of asked you to do at the time.*

BENNETT: Well, they (the school) could have given me German tutoring at that time, or I could have been given homework or something. I had a lovely time, I mean they had Handarbeit. So we were supposed to learn sewing and knitting and all that. So I did learn something about crocheting and I did learn about knitting. But then when it came to embroidery, somehow or other this didn't really grab me and also I was in the middle of reading a book which had been recommended by my German teacher who had come and tutored me at the beginning at home. It was called The Secret of the Old Mamselle. And you can imagine from the title what it was.

I had begun this book and was deep in it and just really wanted to go on reading. So I conceived the notion of saying that since I wasn't really very good at Handarbeit, and I really needed to work on my German, couldn't I read this aloud to the class. So that was quite all right with everybody and we all had a lovely time. We were just about get to the juicy part when suddenly (laughter) Fraulein Mommsen came in, and said, “What are you reading?” and confiscated the book. (laughter) Which meant everybody promptly was

going for a copy wherever they could find it. Q: You know for someone who was brought up in a most controlled manner, you seem to be a very free spirit. Was this all rebellion or did you just, as you say, you learned how to go along with it?

BENNETT: It was controlled, as I say. My grandmother was simply marvelous just so long as it wasn't anything downright dangerous or not sensible and so forth. I didn't try to get out of the norms. When it came to scholastics, I was very good at doing my own thing.

I remember at Foxcroft I took Latin and quickly discovered that I was doing Latin from French and Spanish which is sort of the opposite of what you're supposed to be doing in Latin. And this was a class that was being taught by a Virginia lady who didn't really care much about Latin and she was not going to be teaching after the next year and she just really didn't do much of anything. And most of the class were repeaters anyway, and it was the worst thing. And there were three of us who really rather liked Latin and we'd be getting A pluses on our tests, but we never got beyond the ablative absolute in the first year and barely got the first conjugation or the second conjugation, I forget what we did finish. We did learn the motto of the State of Virginia, but other than that, that was about it.

So the three of us went to the academic head and said, “Look, we can't take this class. The others are such dodoes in it. They aren't interested and we really are interested. Couldn't we please be put in Latin III?” which meant that we were going to miss out on Livy and a little more grammar. So she thought a while and then said, “All right, you can go into Latin III.” Which we enjoyed. I don't know about the others. My marks went down to B at that point. Well, then I knew that Cicero was going to be a horrible class, and so I thought a little while and I went to see the new Latin teacher who was quite a buddy of mine and I said, “Look, I really don't want to sit through Cicero, I'd much rather take Virgil,” which she was offering as an elective. “Can't I do that?” She said, “If you want college credit, you've got to do Cicero.” I said, “What would happen if I were to read Cicero by myself and take the exam when I come back? Then could you give me credit?” So she thought for a while and said, all right, she'd do that.

So I took Cicero home and read it to myself, but just flipping through and just getting the gist of it. I picked out all the famous passages on my own and had a lovely time with it and studied vocabulary like mad and did nothing with grammar and took the test when I got back to school. And sort of knew I hadn't done well at all, but anyhow I bumped into Miss Fiala two days after this and said, “Well, did you decide to pass me yet?” And she said, “No”, which was her mistake. And I said, “I just want to tell you, if you put me in that Cicero class, I guarantee to make your life total hell.” (laughter) It worked. I was translating “the ghost's father” instead of “the father's ghost” and I had a lovely time in Virgil and it was great fun. So I'm quite good at that kind of thing. Let's see, you got onto something about . . .

*Q: Oh, that it was interesting that your father told you to go ahead and “Heil Hitler”, and listen to it but not believe. Well, he probably had no alternative at that point.*

BENNETT: Well, he could have said,”Just say your father doesn't want you to attend the class.” But he probably thought it wouldn't hurt me to be exposed to something as dull as that. Which is why I never understood why anybody could get excited about Marxism, having tried to read Das Kapital. (laughter) You just can't get through it.

One of the other things we did, I don't know that I had to do it. We did go to a couple of the Hitler rallies which were quite something to go to and I was as close to Hitler as I am to that wall and had a fairly good look at him. He wasn't that impressive, but my goodness, there was something magnetic about his voice. And then of course this orchestration of great shouts and all that.

*Q: So you did go to the rallies. With your parents?*

BENNETT: No. I think — I went with my parents to one or two. After they'd left, my governess had gotten engaged to a German. He was from the Rhineland of Polish extraction a couple of generations back, an awfully nice man. I remember the three of us

went to the Air Show along with my best friend and I had a camera this big which was sort of a mini-Brownie and I innocently started taking pictures with it. Somebody came along and confiscated the film. I mean obviously they were accustomed to more sophisticated things and thought I was probably trying to steal secrets. I was merely trying to see if the camera would actually register! (laughter)

*Q: Well, when your mother met Hitler, did she pass on her impressions to you?*

BENNETT: Well, that's why I want her to tell you because it's better when she tells it than if I were to tell it.

*Q: Could you tell me so that I'll know what to ask her?*

BENNETT: Oh just ask her if she met Hitler ever and she'll take it from there.

*Q: I wish I'd known that because I could have asked her during one of our other sessions. I don't know if she'll be willing to talk again.*

BENNETT: Oh, I'm sure she will.

*Q: Sometime when she comes in again. Well, I think it's interesting that you grew up in the Service and seemed to take it all in stride.*

BENNETT: Well, let's put it this way. I took it in stride. A lot of it was natural. But . . .

*Q: And why was it natural then?*

BENNETT: Oh, I mean the social end of meeting foreigners, being comfortable with foreigners, that part. What I did not take in stride was housekeeping, but then housekeeping would have been difficult anyplace. I'm just not particularly fond of it - who is - and this idea that this was supposed to be the be-all and the apotheosis of one's aim in

life. I found there was a world of difference between being an irresponsible daughter and a wife and mother when I went into the Service.

The first inkling I had of this was when I was staying with the Warren[Avra M. Warren was Ambassador to Panama 1944-45] in Panama and I discovered that Mrs. Warren had to go down to the Commissary and do the shopping for the Embassy because at that time they had the gold and silver commissaries and her Chinese cook was not given the permission to do the marketing in the Commissary. And I thought that was pretty hard lines when you had finally become an ambassador's wife, the least that you could do was to be waited on. And then I remember being rather impressed when I heard that Andr#e Sparks (Mrs. Edward) who by this time was the wife of the Ambassador to Bolivia, she was having to cook the hams. Of course her cook didn't do them right or something like that. It began to dawn on me that maybe this wasn't such a bed of roses as I always thought it was. (laughter)

We were very lucky, you know. At ambassadorial posts we mostly inherited households and since then, now, I don't know how it is with all of the embassies, but certainly the European embassies, they've got social secretaries who can help run households. I always used to say to mine, “Since you're the one that has to deal with it, you just do it. I'll approve anything you want!” (laughter)

*Q: And how about your five children? Are they scattered to the winds? In the Foreign Service?*

BENNETT: No. Our second son at one point said, “Tell me why I should join the Foreign Service.” And I said, “No you don't. You tell us why you want to, but we're not telling you.” And that took care of that. He actually ended up in the Navy JAG (Judge Advocate General corps). And so far he's had home assignments. And he's currently at Norfolk as the number two legal beagle at SACLANT (Supreme Allied Command Atlantic) and the other admiral, I mean there are two admirals wearing three hats, he's assigned to that.

Our eldest never wanted to go abroad. He likes to travel, but... He served in Vietnam and I think that's the extent of his wanting to be abroad. He likes being in Washington and works for a firm here. He's very involved with the Vietnam Vets' Coalition and that takes up a lot of his time.

Our twins both took the Foreign Service exam for a lark and did not pass and thought that was very amusing. I thought it was amusing they even thought of taking the thing. But I think partly they thought they'd pacify papa over this. Annie was an art history major and then discovered, after getting her master's at Chicago, that jobs in museums aren't very plentiful and didn't want to do galleries and ended up in the international student grant business for a while and became very knowledgeable about the U.S. Visa system. Then she left that and worked for the Carnegie Endowment people for a while. And everybody kept saying, “Oh you ought to get your doctorate in educational administration.” She finally succumbed to those blandishments and she's been working on her dissertation at Harvard.

It's a tedious procedure because it seems to me that you don't narrow it down just to one angel dancing on the head of a pin, but you narrow it down to the little toenail on the left foot of the angel. And you have to write jargon, too, a certain amount. She was taught at Madeira to write English (laughter) so it still doesn't come naturally.

*Q: Learning a new language.*

BENNETT: And she doesn't like padding them as much as they require and she's having difficulties with her computer. Her old one broke down so she's now working on a new one. Well, you know what computers are like, so you can sympathize.

Her younger sister by six minutes married an English Anglican clergyman who is the Vicar of Hebden Bridge in West Yorkshire. They have the grandson and a daughter who is a year and a half. And Ellen, much to the family's amusement - first of all, we all thought it was hysterical that she should be marrying a parson. She's the last one we would have

thought of doing so. And now she's actually on the Parish church committee which is another laugh. And they've put her on the financial planning committee which is even funnier because Ellen finds that if she has a penny in her pocket, she's going to spend it. (laughs) Apparently other people's money is a different story.

And then Victoria is in Seattle. She graduated as a geologist from Tufts and came down here and got a job immediately at the National Academy of Sciences and discovered that instead of doing geology outdoors as she liked, she was being asked to do grammar indoors. So she went on from that and worked on a grant at Louisiana State for a year or so. And I don't know whether it was the money ran out, [or] she couldn't take the climate anymore — she's got red hair and she minds the heat horribly. And she piled into her rather elderly car and drove out to Seattle where she had a couple of friends and where she has been ever since.

And after being president of one of the Toastmistress's clubs and re-writing the constitution of almost all of them there, and teaching public speaking at the Y and free-lancing on Kodiak for six months. I don't know what all else she hasn't done. She bought three houses and did all the maintenance work including changing a septic tank. She won't do the wiring, that's the only thing. She's now settled in for the moment as an investment planner. She's working for IDS.

*Q: She sounds like a woman of many skills. How old is she?*

BENNETT: She's just turned thirty-six.

*Q: So she's done a lot and has found herself.*

BENNETT: I think so. She knows what she likes. Now whether she's actually found her final aim in life, that I'm not quite sure of, but she's awfully good at that. When she first started in this, she'd go and — she's one of those awful people who will call you up at dinnertime wanting to discuss your finances, but she wants to come see you to do it, she

makes that quite clear. The few people she did get involved with, she'd started telling, “Now look. You cannot do this and this and this. You must make a budget,” and that sort of thing. She very good at that sort of thing.There's a strong teaching strain in my mother's family and in my husband's family, so I guess she comes by it naturally. Well, I don't know what else I can tell you about our various postings. NATO to me was the most fascinating and I think also to Tap. As he used to say, his writ ran from the Yukon to Mount Ararat. We covered most of that territory. To be at the NATO Council is a wonderful thing because the Europeans send their best people there. A lot of them go on to be foreign minister or have been foreign minister or, in one case, I think he's gone on to be foreign minister. A lot of them have been ambassadors in Moscow, and one or two have been in both Moscow and Beijing, and it's an interesting group of people to be with. Unlike the U.N., you have the feeling they're all pulling together. Maybe not the same method, but they all are working towards something.

*Q: A common goal.*

BENNETT: And to accomplish something, unlike the U.N. which has sort of gotten kind of out of hand in the last few years. And we had Joseph Luns who is essentially one of those bigger than life people.

*Q: In every way. (laughs)*

BENNETT: Yes, yes. And he told our departing Turkish colleague who was going to be the perm rep in New York, “Monsieur, vous quittez le cercle pour le cirque” And it's true, it's a very exclusive little club and it's like a wonderful traveling house party because they have meetings in the different countries and the wives are urged to come. You can go to the meetings as long as you - well, you can't go to the Council meetings, but you can go to the plenary sessions and there's usually a very nice program on and so you get to see a lot of the countries.

And then of course living in Belgium was quite a pleasure, too. It's a very hospitable country, our spot in Brussels particularly, and such a nice city to be in all told. It was just a lovely time to be there. (laughs)

*Q: And what years were those?*

BENNETT: '77 to '83.

*Q: Just before you retired?*

BENNETT: Well, he expected to retire coming back and then Shultz asked him to stay on for the election year in the Congressional Liaison job. Which is also an interesting job, but it's such a stinker that we were counting the days and the weeks and the hours practically until we could get out. So we were very grateful to have that extra year because then we retired without any bitterness. Otherwise, when one retires, one is still sort of looking over one's shoulder saying, “Oh, if only I'd been able to stay on one more year or something!” (laughs)

*Q: This way he found out what it was like. (laughs) There's something in that, too. But I've noticed that your mother has traveled a great deal in her life and continues to travel.*

BENNETT: And so do we!

*Q: And you, too. And this, I think, goes back even before the Foreign Service. It's simply been a family life.*

BENNETT: Well, to a certain extent. Of course my uncle was in the Service and so Grandmother would go out and visit him and took Mummy. In fact Mummy really met my father in Poland when she was visiting my uncle there. Grandmother used to go out and visit Pierrepont, I mean she went out to Tokyo to visit him. And she apparently infuriated Pierrepont because she sat next to somebody, I don't know whether he was a Japanese

or whether he was another foreign diplomat of some kind. Anyhow, she asked the man this question which she thought was a perfectly normal question and the man answered at great length. So Grandmother regaled Pierrepont with this and he said, “He had no right to tell you that! And you shouldn't have asked that question either!” (laughter)

*Q: On the contrary, I would have thought he should have been very grateful, but he wasn't! (overlapping conversations) Now where does the name Pierrepont come from?*

BENNETT: Well, my grandmother's maiden name was Pierrepont. The original Pierrepont to come to this country, they spelled it then with only one r, I don't know if he was one of the founders of Yale, but anyhow he was at Yale. Amongst other things they had several cemetery lots, that's one thing the family jokingly refers to. I really ought to remember more. I mean, somebody did the genealogy and of course got us way back to William the Conqueror, but I take some of that with a grain of salt. They have pretty well documented most of them. Then we had the Pierrepont who came down to the New York area who was Hezekiah Beers, can you imagine a worse name than that? Anyhow, Mrs. Hezekiah Beers thought it would be more stylish to spell it with the double r, e, so she was the one who brought us back to the original spelling.

And then my grandmother's mother was a Low and they were from Salem, Mass. and were in the China trade. One of her, oh I guess she'd have been a great aunt, was Harriet Low who went out to visit her brother - Grandmother's grandfather - who was in Macao at the time. Harriet wrote her memoirs and she was a rather forceful type because women were not supposed to go up to Canton and she managed to go to Canton as one of the first ladies to go. And they sort of helped break the rules. This was before the Opium War and so forth. And so, for certain there's travel in the Low blood and I don't know.

On my father's mother's side. She was a Rutherfurd. They came from around New Jersey, I don't know that they were so much into traveling unless it was sort of the grand tour type of thing. The Pierrepont aunts, they were two maiden ladies and a widowed uncle who sort

of rather brought my grandmother up. Her mother died when she was twelve, leaving the four older children, of whom Grandmother was the youngest - no, she was the younger girl, she was the second. And there were two little boys who were sort of afterthoughts, they were ten and twelve years younger. And the aunts brought them up. And they were gorgeously Victorian in what they did and didn't dThey used to belong to the Girls' Friendly Society at Grace Church in Brooklyn. And the house was completely Victorian in style. Grandmother. Now talk about a contained, orderly period of growing up, Grandmother had it. Well, she was allowed to go to Miss Packer's Institute in Brooklyn by herself, walking there. She met my grandfather somewhere. Grandfather was twelve or fourteen years older than she. Grandfather would be going to the office, so they'd pass each other on the street. And he started tipping his hat. And she eventually would sort of dip a little a curtsey or bow - I don't know what, I guess she'd curtsey. One day, she thought it would be fun to see what would happen if she didn't. The next day he came rushing - he came to call to inquire if he'd done something wrong. (laughter)

When any young man was brave enough to come and call on either Aunt Annie or Grandmother, my great-grandfather apparently would sit in the back of the room this way (laughter). My grandfather apparently was clever enough to realize he had to get around Papa, so he'd come and play chess or checkers with Papa, but would pay some attention to Grandmother. And when apparently he finally asked my great-grandfather for Grandmother's hand, Great-Grandfather was reputed to have said, “Why not Annie? The older one.” (laughter) Well, that was a sort of never-never type of childhood. My mother's type of growing up was a little closer to - I don't know if you read the book that Louis Auchincloss wrote about Adele Tobin. Mummy was younger than that, but that was roughly the style. And they were much wealthier, so it was a little grander style, but that was . . .

*Q: Your mother had a bit more freedom?*

BENNETT: Yes.

*Q: It's interesting, her love of sports and her story of wearing the voluminous knickers, bloomers, really, she said they were almost knickerbockers. And that Miss Chapin's was the first school to do that and she was in the first class that did that. And having to wrap a skirt over that for propriety.*

BENNETT: Well by the time I went to that one year at Chapin, the school uniform, which was bloomers which I guess came down to - well they didn't show under the tunic, but wore a tunic over them. And when we played sports, the tunic came off. But, even so. Actually I could never see there was anything the matter with bloomers, they were very comfortable.

*Q: Very sensible really. (laughter) Well, it's amazing what we all survive, isn't it? (laughter) Our children, too.*

BENNETT: Have you thought of anything else? Seems to me I've bashed your ear within an inch of its life.

*Q: No, it's marvelous.*

SHORT PAUSE

BENNETT: When the Dominican Republic had its revolution in '65, I was here for the children's spring holidays. Almost everybody was evacuated. My one thought was, one mustn't get in the State Department's hair. One must not rock the boat. I was brought up that the men handled the business and the ladies stayed out of it. And of course having family in this area, I did have a place to lay my weary head. And I've realized since the Iranian Hostage Crisis and so forth, how much I should have been doing and it is my profound regret that I didn't have the wit, or the inclination, perhaps, but certainly not the wit to realize that it was up to me do something to make the Department be sure that these people had a place to stay and some funds. But I guess we have really, in explanation, we

hadn't really gotten used to these upheavals and these constant evacuations of personnel. Nowadays it's a very different story.

*Q: Part of that was tradition, though.*

BENNETT: Oh, yes, and that's where my being, old, old Service comes in. Because it would never occur to me, well, it was always very interesting because. . . Well Eve Labouisse was always a doer and of course she wasn't Foreign Service and she'd been a career woman in her own right. She used to feel that she and Harry were a team and she would quite frequently go in the office and, I gather, discuss policy to a certain extent. Certainly Tap would never have tolerated my doing that. (laughs)

*Q: Was Labouisse a political?*

BENNETT: He was a political appointee. He'd been head of AID or UNRRA, I think. And he went on after that to be the head of UNICEF. They were lovely people to be with. Charming and so interesting. Eve Labouisse learned Greek. I thought I was pretty good at languages, but she was fantastic and could speak so many more than I could.

*Q: So really it was part of our attitude toward the Service in those days*

BENNETT: Exactly.

*Q: That we were just adjuncts and we had a role to play and that was it. Interesting. They've come a long way, haven't they?*

BENNETT: Yes. And I'm glad. I think Louisa Kennedy did the most superb job for the wives in Iran when the hostage thing came up.

*Q: I was down in Brazil and really wasn't aware of her role until I read the book that he wrote and she had a prologue in it. Tell me a little bit about her contribution.*

BENNETT: Well, I again didn't know too much about it. I was in and out at that time, because we were still in NATO, but they'd been with us in Greece. I did know her, and I heard and read in the papers and so forth and thought, well the least I can do is to show solidarity. So I inquired how she was doing and asked if she might come and have a cup of tea. She did. So she told me all about her interview with Barbara Walters. She also said that she'd been over in Paris doing an interview and that the Parisian television program people had not told her that they were putting on a very pro-Khomeini type on the program with her. I forget who was on it, but apparently the French audience response to her was actually fantastic. She just told it like it was and they wrote in and said, “Why can't you have more people like her?” Louisa is quite a person. I'm sorry that we've lost them from the Service. I think that probably that was enough - that experience.

PAUSE

*Q: Would you put that on tape, the way you view the role of the wife of the ambassador.*

BENNETT: Well, I used to think that it really wasn't a wise idea to try to have intimate friends. You have friends, yes, but you didn't unburden your soul at any point to them because it was either going to reflect on your spouse's job or on him or on your country or what have you. Or you could inadvertently let out something that you shouldn't have. This, of course, was something that was ingrained in me because my father would say, “Don't ever tell anybody your opinion because people will attribute it to me.” So all my life I have not expressed opinions on anything worthwhile until Tap retired. Now I have.

*Q: Now you have a surfeit of them to unload. (laughter)*

BENNETT: And I notice that other people don't seem to have this approach, or maybe they just use the word “friend” more loosely than I do. But that's one of the things that I think is perhaps different in the Foreign Service from say, in business, because in business you grow up with a lot of other wives in the same levels so that I think you can keep them

on. For instance - well, I don't know - the President's wife and the President, they can keep their friends, but they can't see as much of them as they did and I'm quite sure the relationship changes enormously when they get in the White House. And it's the rare friend who would be able to resist saying, “Oh well I was at the White House and the President said . . .” And the President probably hasn't said anything that he wouldn't to a newspaper reporter, but still.

*Q: It's the same as an ambassador's wife. It's lonely.*

BENNETT: And your husband doesn't want to play favorites. At least I don't think one should. Inevitably one does find some people more congenial than others or else they don't have children and are therefore able to do things and so one perhaps can take a trip here or do something like that. But one's always sort of - at least I was - pretty conscious of the fact, “Well now we've done this with the A's, we'd better pay attention to the B's.” (laughter)

*Q: But that's what keeps up good morale at posts. And makes your job harder, really. Now whether that's going on these days or not, I don't know.*

BENNETT: Well, as I say, it's a completely different thing. As the DCM's wife, you don't quite have that. You're already getting a little lonelier, but you can have friends. You're sort of primus inter pares among the counselors' wives and you can have friends and perhaps play favorites a little bit more. As I say, this whole business has changed so that I think now. . . Well, I remember when I was complaining to Bob Woodwar[Robert Forbes Woodward was Ambassador to Costa Rica, Uruguay, Chile and Spain, and was Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs] about the '72 ruling about not being asked - letting you ask wives to do things. Bob said, “Well, I should think that would make life simpler. There are always three or four who do all the work anyway, so you don't have to bother with the others.” Well, that's a very clear-cut and pragmatic way of looking at things.

*Q: I always thought, too, that you should just assess what you could do with the resources that you had.*

BENNETT: Um-hum.

*Q: Although the administrative section and the GSOs (General Service Officer) are doing a lot of the work that volunteer wives used to do. And so it's really an added financial burden to the Foreign Service because they're paying both US and host country national employees to do things that we used to do.*

BENNETT: Well there you get onto my other bete noire which is that I feel this business of paying separation allowances when it's the wife who's staying home because she wants to pursue her career is the pits.

*Q: Absolutely, madness.*

BENNETT: That really infuriates me because I think it is encouraging separation rather than . . . Instead of doing that, they ought to pay the wife to accompany the husband. I think the Japanese have worked out the most sensible arrangement on this where, I forget what the percentage is - it's not up to what the wife would earn as a salary at home, but she would have some self-respect because she is earning it and it's not paid to hubby, it's paid to her.

*Q: I think we'll have to come to that eventually.*

BENNETT: But how you're ever going to compensate anybody on the basis of the dinner parties they've given and whether they've told the servants or done it themselves, this I don't understand.

*Q: I think they're going to have to have a job description for being a Foreign Service wife and pay — I mean you can't deduce who gives the best dinner party, that's ridiculous.*

*But I think they just have to write a general job description, give the Foreign Service wife position a bit more status and pay her a salary.*

BENNETT: Which wouldn't come to more than the separation allowance actually. Except that there are exceptions to this. I know of one case where it's literally the son's education. He's at the high school level and they don't know whether they're going to be at the post for a year or not and so . . . And it's not that she's trying to pursue a career either. She commutes back to the post at every turn she gets. They aren't that well-heeled so she can't get backwards and forwards very much. It's really a hardship on the whole family.

*Q: And even one of the members of FLO told me that the separate maintenance allowance was being abused.*

BENNETT: Yes, exactly.

*Q: And at one point, we had the Director of the Family Liaison Office here on a separate maintenance allowance. (laughs)*

BENNETT: That's amazing. Which one was that?

*Q: That was Marcia Curran.*

BENNETT: No, I don't know her.

*Q: She was about, not the last one, but the one before that, the penultimate one.*

BENNETT: Well, I think I have really covered the universe.

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BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: W. Tapley Bennett, Jr.

Spouse entered Service: 1941Left Service: 1985You entered Service: 1922Left Service: 1985

Posts: With parents: 1922Caracas, Venezuela 1923Prague, Czechoslovakia 1924-26Riga, Latvia 1927-28Washington, DC 1928-33Buenos Aires, Argentina 1934-36Berlin, Germany

With husband: 1947-57Washington, DC 1957-61Vienna, Austria 1961-64Athens, Greece 1964-66Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic 1966-69Lisbon, Portugal 1969-71Air University, Maxwell Field, Alabama 1971-77United Nations, New York 1977-83NATO Brussels, Belgium 1983-85Washington, DC

Status: Spouse of retired AEP, Assistant Secretary of State

Date and place of birth: New York City, 1922, parents stationed in Caracas

Maiden Name: Margaret Rutherfurd White

Parents:

John Campbell White, Foreign Service Officer, AEP

Elizabeth Moffat White, Foreign Service Spouse

Schools: Foxcroft School; Attended Julliard Institute of Musical Art, Barnard and American University (”ahead of period” drop out!)

Date and place of marriage: June 23, 1945, Bernardsville, New Jersey

Children: Five

Profession: Diplomatic wife/housewife

Positions held:At Post: Children's Friendship Fund, Vienna; Vice-president Hellenic-American Women's Club, Board of AWOG, Lyceum Club, Eureka in Greece; Secretary then Treasurer of the UN Delegates' Wives' Club, UN, NYC.

In Washington: Late '40s and '50s Board of Georgetown Co-op Nursery School; Membership Committee anfund raising for National Symphony; since '83, 3 years on Washington Cathedral Building committee; Board of International Students' House.

End of interview